

Mrs. E. Hemingway
FINCA VIGIA SAN FRANCISCO DE PAULA CUBA

July 22
1943

My dearie Olga;

It is the day after Ernest's birthday, compared to which the day after Xmas is only a mild relief and boon to the troubled spirit. I dread July 21 practically from year to year and am always enchanted when the day ends without any dead guests around the property. This birthday began rather erratically due to the fact that E departed the house at 6:30^{a.m.} on some errand on other and showed up again at 11:30. The birthday breakfast therefore passed by default. At 11:30 there were four Spaniards who had already been here an hour and stayed another hour (though they were all coming back at 4 that afternoon) to make their felicitations. Finally, by dint of some quick foot work, I got them out, and we had our birthday breakfast at 12:30, consisting of coffee cake and champagne-cifer. It also was ~~Patrick~~ Patrick's birthday (he is Mousie the 15 year old) because his birthday happened on June 29 while he was on board E's boat and everyone forgot it and besides they couldn't do anything about it then. So Mousie and Papa opened their presents and Mother and Gigi and I swilled coffee cake and champagne. After which there was a lull before the storm during which everyone went to its own part of the establishment and maintained silence and tried to fortify itself. The guests began arriving about five, spilling out of cars like old fashioned Chaplin movies. Presently there were 34 Basques and Spaniards (all men) bollicking around down by the pool. Most of them know Mother well. The great thing you say in Spanish (if you are peasant people) is: How strong and healthy you look. That, in American, is the equivalent I suppose of "how beautiful and brilliant." They all said this with great sincerity to Mother and ~~xx~~ wrung her hand and she was greeted by cries of rejoicing in Basque. Basque is one of those languages no one can figure out where it came from; in this it has some affiliation to Finnish and Hungarian, other sports.

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Mother and Jane Joyce and I (the only females admitted) hung about the pool awhile eating sandwiches and drinking and watching people take running dives which we felt could only end in their slipping on the cement and diving onto same, by error. Then we withdrew and I came up to my room and went to sleep (I believe Mother read.) At about nine or so, this gathering, roughly ~~22~~ 38 of us, set off for the pigeon shooting club where we were to eat a vast hot meal that ought to satisfy the mammoth and interminable hunger of the Basques. There was more drinking and jollity and I noticed Gigi (the 11 year old) riding around on the shoulders of an odd Marine, and he Gigi seemed happy but a little blear-eyed, but I paid very little attention.

At table Mother sat between Don Andres who is a priest (was on our side in the war in a machine gun outfit and is the greatest lover of democracy I have ever met personally) and Garay who is the Basque delegate, which means representative of the Basque govt in exile. We had no sooner more or less arranged ourselves than bombs began to go off; they must have been huge firecrackers. There was a rapidly suppressed tendency to throw rolls; this was put down with the cry, "No, No, not until after dessert." Several people rose to make some sort of speech and fell in their tracks; one man appeared wearing a full catcher's outfit, with mask, having been at other of these parties. People sang, made sudden speeches of their own, and jollity reigned; some people simply sat where they were and had fits of giggles. One man poured wine on himself to prove he had been wrong in an argument; another man danced about the table like Salome around the head of St John the Baptist. At last (and none too soon I felt: I had made no conversation at all beyond the words, No^o, No, not until after dessert) the cakes were brought in. The priest's sister made one,

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very beautiful, with Basque words of congratulation and Basque and American flags; and another -- which I had bought -- came in with its candles burning like a forest fire and there was a brief moment when it seemed Ernest's new beard would catch on fire as he blew it out. We all sang the Basque hymn and something that looked like ~~Home~~ Land of the Free and Home of the Brave and there was an enormous mixed howling which I ~~understood~~ understood to be the Cuban National Anthem. After this display of emotion people ate cake for a few moments in tolerable peace and we beat it.

Then I ~~missed~~ discovered that Mousie had taken Gigi home due to the fact that Gigi was drunk at the time; and Mousie was playing poker dice at the kiosk bar with a Cuban boy (having more or less retired from the main party.) I decided I better go home and see about Gigi so Jane drove Mother and me but when we got here we had no keys; however that was solved by piling in a window. We then ~~missed~~ discovered we had no key for Gigi's house (the children have one apart) so Mousie was called and returned bearing keys and the news that the party has sort of melted with people just wandering around with their arms about each other. At twelve thirty, when Ma and I had just retired, Ernest returned (Ernest is now doubling for Wotan) and said that he was disgusted as two men had picked a fight with each other but not done any fighting so he and Patchi, a friend of his, fought for them (for the protocol) and had a beautiful fight which they enjoyed and all admired and knocked each other down several times in the club drive. Also Bug said bitterly that no one would serve anymore wine after I left which was a hell of a note (a mistake of the club servants or a precaution.) Anyhow it ended well and no one was dead; those people who did not come to the party were roundly branded as cowards since it is regarded generally as a feat of daring to show up on July 21.

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I feel very relieved now and as if perhaps a certain amount of quiet would descend. Mother looks marvelous, so pretty that everyone speaks of it, and is the beloved of my men folks. The children call her Mother contentedly as Papa does, and none of my men seem to wish to be far away from her. The children talk to her a great deal but I see that they do not use all her time; she still has plenty of rest and reading and exercise and being alone. But they do love her very ardently and cutely and Ernest opined that he thought he might as well dispense with me and settle for Mother. She is brown and really lovely looking; her face looks firm and fresh and she has no circles under her eyes. She has had a bad itch on her throat (prickly heat Ernest says, I do not know) and was going about suffering in her usual resigned way until I finally caught on that this was bad and got her some chloroform and now the itch is passed. I think that is the only discomfort she has had.

I believe she is having a good time this year (two years ago she did not) and she is again taking joy out of reading which is one of the finest joys there is, and is a sort of thermometer to a person's inner peace anyhow because you cannot really enjoy books if you're all churned up.

The other good news is that Lizo is going to South America. When the news came Mother instantly began saying she would have to leave sooner, had to send cables, all her usual machinery of self immolation. But I persuaded her to give it up and be sensible because Lizo is no more going to get off in two weeks than she is going to fly that distance on

Icarus' wings. So now Ma is perfectly calm about it and will handle it when she gets home. I think she is delighted and I am more than delighted as I foresee a far quieter winter for her, with less responsibility of a

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kind that wear~~shook~~ her out. She was terribly disappointed that Walter did not accept that big new job offered to him, and so am I. I think he could have done enormously kind things in it; those poor submerged people of Europe will need all the honorable and brave friends they can get.

His motives are however his own and he has to make these decisions, but I do think it is a great waste and pity. .

We speak a great deal of you and Alfie with love and admiration (we are absolutely agreed about this; though Mother does not entirely share my warm feelings for the Georges). Mother thinks you are a wonderful woman and so do I. I really do. I also think you are a patient and kind one, as I saw from your last letter to me (with what shame and self-disgust) that I had hurt you with my blasts about everyone and everything in Mother's house. I apologize with my whole heart, Olga, as I would not do that truly for anything; and you will have to attribute it to the fact that I talk and write as if both ink and saliva were vitriol products and I rarely use my head (and probably also I enjoy blowing off.) Please forgive me. Your letter made me very ashamed; it was so reasonable and generous and so unnecessarily modest (what have you to be modest about), and know that I am not mean inside of me about Ruth or anyone, and take it all back, and know I was being silly and loud and hasty, and everything is going to work out fine as between good decent adults, without my mixing my idiot fingers into it. Just please oggscuse me, will you? I will be very grateful and will not behave like a big mouthed goof again for quite a while.

Kiss Dr Alfie. We are very proud of his goings-on at New Haven et al. Always proud. The ~~pink~~ flower of the family. I want to see Anne and meantime I send a kiss to my namesake, right on her bright little button of a mouth. I think bangs sound~~s~~ lovely. Always,

Worth



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